

TENNESSEE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FISCAL REVIEW COMMITTEE



FISCAL MEMORANDUM

HB 834 – SB 1246

March 29, 2015

SUMMARY OF ORIGINAL BILL: Defines a “released time course” as period of time that a student is excused from school to attend a course in religious moral instruction by a sponsoring entity off of school property. Requires local boards of education to adopt a policy that excuses a student from school to attend one released time course in religious moral instruction for at least one class period per week. Attending students will be responsible for all missed classwork. All local boards of education shall provide a form to all schools that a student’s parent or guardian must sign before the student will be allowed to participate in such courses. The local education agency (LEA) shall not be responsible for transportation to or from the released time course. The released time course shall be counted as part of the student’s actual school day and the student shall not be penalized for any schoolwork missed during released time. The LEA may determine the courses or electives from which a student may be excused in order to participate in a released time course.

FISCAL IMPACT OF ORIGINAL BILL:

NOT SIGNIFICANT

SUMMARY OF AMENDMENT (004712): Deletes all language of the original bill. Defines a “released time course” as a period of time that a student is excused from school to attend a course in religious moral instruction by a sponsoring entity off of school property. Authorizes local boards of education to adopt a policy that excuses a student from school to attend one released time course in religious moral instruction for at least one class period per week. Requires the released time course to be conducted off of school property, for the student’s parents to submit a written permission form to the school, for the sponsoring entity to be responsible for transportation to and from the released time course, and for the sponsoring entity to assume liability for the student during the time they are away from school property. Prohibits the use of public funds or the involvement of school personnel in such courses. Participating students will be required to make up any missed classwork. School principals shall make the determination of which classes participating students are allowed to miss; however, students may not be excused from any class in which the subject is tested on a state standardized test. Sets forth certain conditions and waiver of liability that shall be included on the parent’s written permission form. The released time course shall be counted as part of the student’s actual school day.

FISCAL IMPACT OF BILL WITH PROPOSED AMENDMENT:

Unchanged from the original fiscal note.

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Assumptions for the bill as amended:

- Participating students will continue to be counted as being enrolled in their home LEA.
- No change in the state and local match required and provided by the Basic Education Program (BEP) funding formula.
- LEAs will not be responsible for transportation to and from released time courses.

CERTIFICATION:

The information contained herein is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey L. Spalding". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jeffrey" and last name "Spalding" clearly distinguishable.

Jeffrey L. Spalding, Executive Director

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